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THE  
FIRST CENTURY  
OF  
Hunterdon County,  
NEW JERSEY.

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FLEMINGTON, N. J.:  
E. VOSELLER.

1878.



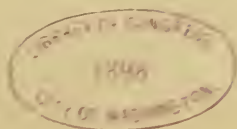
THE  
FIRST CENTURY  
OF  
HUNTERDON COUNTY,  
STATE OF NEW JERSEY.

BY

GEORGE S. MOTT, D. D.

*Read before the New Jersey Historical Society, at Trenton,  
January 17th, 1875.*

FLEMINGTON, N. J.  
E. VOSELLER, BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER.  
1875



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# HUNTERDON COUNTY.

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In this sketch of the "First Century of Hunterdon County," I shall restrict myself to the territory now comprised within the boundary of the county. Because the history of that portion of "Old Hunterdon," which is now included in Mercer County, has been cared for by others.<sup>1</sup>

New Jersey held out two hands of welcome to those of Europe who were seeking an asylum from evils which made their mother country no longer endurable. The one hand was Delaware Bay, the other was Raritan Bay. Through these openings to the sea ready access was gained to the two rivers, which took their names from these bays. These streams opened avenues for up among fertile valleys until, in Hunterdon County, they approached at the nearest points within twenty miles of each other, and there the tributaries of each drain the same hills. The mild climate—less bleak than New England, not so hot as Virginia—the abundance of game, fish and fruits,<sup>2</sup> won to those shores the children of the northern half of Europe, who were accustomed to the temperate zone. Lord Berkley and Sir George Carteret,<sup>3</sup> prepared a constitution, which was almost as democratic as that which we now enjoy. This assured civil and religious rights to all the settlers. Thus invited by the country and its privileges, emigrants streamed in from Europe, Long Island and New England.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hale's History of Pennington. Dr. Hall's History of Trenton, and the Histories of Princeton and the battle of Trenton.

<sup>2</sup> Smith's History of New Jersey, pp. 20, 105, 174-177. He speaks of peaches, plums, and strawberries growing plentifully in the woods.

<sup>3</sup> To them the proprietary right of the soil had been conveyed and they divided the Province between them, into East and West Jersey. Berkley had West Jersey.

The Quakers in England had become the objects of suspicion and dislike to the government; and they were assailed by penalty and persecution, which led them to look over the ocean for some spot that should furnish the toleration they could not secure in their native land. John Fenwicke and Edward Byllinge, both Quakers, bought out Berkley's shares. But Byllinge soon became so embarrassed in business, that he made an assignment to Trustees, of whom William Penn was one. But before this he had sold a number of shares. Thus Penn became one of the proprietors of West Jersey, and the owner of large tracts of land in Hunterdon. Soon after Fenwicke made a similar assignment. These Trustees, under the pressure of circumstances, sold shares to different purchasers. As these Trustees were Quakers, the purchasers were mostly members of that body. Two companies were formed for that purpose in 1677, one in Yorkshire and the other in London. Daniel Coxe was connected with the latter, and became the largest holder of shares; and by this means he eventually possessed extensive tracts of land in Old Hunterdon. The tide of immigration now set in rapidly. In the same year the companies were organized and four hundred came over, most of them were persons of property. Burlington was founded, and became the principal town. Here the land office for all West Jersey was located, and deeds were recorded.

In 1696 an agreement was made between Barclay and the proprietors of East Jersey, on the one side, and Byllinge and the proprietors of West Jersey on the other, for running the partition line so as to give as equal a division of the Province as was practicable. A straight line was directed to be surveyed from "Little Egg Harbor, to the most northerly branch of the Delaware." The line was extended as far as the south branch of the Raritan, at a point just east of the Old York Road. This line was run by Keith, Surveyor General of East Jersey. But it was deemed by the West Jersey proprietors to be too far west, and thereby encroaching on their territory, and they objected to its continuance. On September 5th, 1688, Gover-

nors Coxe and Barclay, representing each side, entered into an agreement for terminating all differences, by stipulating that this line, so far as run, should be the bounds, and directing the course by which it should be extended, viz. :—"From that point (where it touched the south branch), along the back of the adjoining plantations, until it touched the north branch of the Raritan at the falls of the Allamitung (now the Lamington Falls), thence running up that stream northward to its rise near Succasunny. From that point, a short straight line was to be run to touch the nearest part of the Passaic River." Such a line would pass about five miles north of Morristown. The course of the Passaic was to be continued as far as the Paquanick, and up that branch to the forty-first degree north latitude; and from that point in "a straight line due east to the partition point on Hudson River, between East Jersey and New York."<sup>1</sup> This line gave to the northern part of West Jersey, the present counties of Warren, Sussex, all of Morris north of Morristown, and those portions of Passaic and Bergen, which lie north of forty-first parallel. Though this agreement was never carried into effect, this division line constituted the western boundary of Hunterdon, and so remained until Morris was set off in 1738. And then all that part of North Jersey, down as far as Musconetcong, was erected into the new county.

The territory of West Jersey was divided into one hundred shares or proprietaries. These were again divided into lots of one hundred each; the inhabitants of which elected commissioners, who were empowered, "To set forth and divide all the lands of the Province as were taken up, or by themselves shall be taken up and contracted for with the natives, and the said lands to divide into one hundred parts, as occasion shall require."<sup>2</sup> The first and second division extended as far as the Assanpink (Trenton).

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<sup>1</sup> Smith's History, pp. 196-198.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. 1 of Concessions of "The Trustees." Quoted in Gordon's History of New Jersey, p. 68.

At the close of the seventeenth century, West Jersey is said to have contained 8,000 inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> These people began to look with longing eyes upon the territory to the north, which was yet held by the Indians. So that the proprietors urged the Council to grant them a third dividend, or taking up of land. In compliance with this request a committee was appointed, consisting of John Wills, Wm. Biddle, Jr., and John Reading, to treat with the natives. This committee reported at a meeting of the Council held June 27th, 1703, "That they had made a full agreement with Himhammoe, for one tract of land adjoining to the division line (i. e., between East and West Jersey) and lying on both sides of the Raritan river. \* \* \* And also with Coponnockous for another tract of land, lying between the purchase made by Adlord Boude<sup>2</sup> and the boundaries of the land belonging to Himhammoe fronting on the Delaware."<sup>3</sup> This purchase was computed to contain 150,000 acres, and the cost, with other incidental charges, was estimated at £700. It was proposed to allow 5,000 acres for each dividend to a proprietary.<sup>4</sup> At another meeting of the Council, held November 2d, 1703, the same committee was sent to those Indians, and particularly to Coponnockous, to have the tract of land lately purchased, "Marked forth and get them to sign a deed for the same. \* \* \* And that they go to Himhammoe's wigwam in order to treat with them, and to see the bounds of the land lately purchased of him." This purchase covered the Old Amwell township, or the present townships of Raritan, Delaware, East and West Amwell.

The 150,000 acres were divided among the proprietors. But the tract which extended north from the Assanpink and which was within the original township of Hopewell, belonging to the West Jersey Society, which was a company of proprietors living in

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon's History, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> This Boude Tract extended southward from Lambertville.

<sup>3</sup> Smith's History of New Jersey, pp. 95, 97.

<sup>4</sup> It is probable that tracts of land had been bargained for previously, by individuals with the Indians.

England. To them Daniel Coxe conveyed this tract in 1691. He obtained the title to it in 1685. He owned 22 proprietary shares.

Among the first who took up land out of this tract of 150,000 acres, was the estate of Benjamin Field.<sup>1</sup> He had 3,000 acres fronting on the river; the southern border of this touched the Society's tract. He also had 2,000 acres near Ringos. Robert Dinsdale had extensive tracts beginning about Lambertville and embracing Mt. Airy. John Calow owned north of the city, and fronting on the river. Wm. Biddle held 5,000 acres immediately north of Calow, fronting on the river. John Reading took up land in the vicinity of Prallsville and Barber's Station. He also owned land about Centre Bridge which was called Reading's Ferry. until 1770, when it went by the name of Howell's Ferry.<sup>2</sup> Other owners of tracts were Gilbert Wheeler, Richard Bull and John Clarke. These large tracts soon passed into other hands. 1705 John Holcombe of Arlington of Pa., bought lands from Wheeler and Bull, and subsequently he made purchases out of the Biddle and Calow tracts. He is the ancestor of the Holcombe families in Hunterdon county. In 1709 Wm. Biles sold to Edward Kemp of Buck's county, Pa., who the next year sold 200 acres to Ralph Brock, a millwright. In 1716 Richard Mew sold one half a tract to John Mumford of Newport, R. I. Joshua Opdyke purchased several hundred acres of the heirs of Wm. Biles. He was the great-grandfather of Hon. George Opdyke, at one time Mayor New York city. In 1714 Wm. Biles, son of W. Biles, Sr., who was then deceased, sold 1,665 acres to Charles Wolverton. The southwest corner of this was on Reading's line; 284 acres of this was sold to Geo. Fox, who came from England. In 1729 this was conveyed to Thomas Canby of Buck's county. In 1735 he sold to Henry Coat, and in 1741 he to Derrick Hoagland. Wm. Rittenhouse had a tract of land east this. Wm. Biddle also sold 1,150 acres in 1732 to

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<sup>1</sup> See subsequent page.

<sup>2</sup> For these facts about Lambertville, I am indebted to manuscripts of P. A. Studdiford, D. D. of Lambertville, N. J.

Peter Emley of Mansfield, now Washington, Warren county. He sold to Christopher Cornelius in 1750. And he sold to Daniel Howell, the same year, 400 acres. This was the Howell from whom the Ferry took its name. His land joined Reading's at the river. Howell conveyed a part of this land in 1754 to Francis Tomlinson. In 1774 this came into possession of General Bray.

Yet further up the Delaware, adventurous settlers pressed, selecting tracts in Kingwood, Franklin and Alexandria townships, checked only by the frowning hills of the Schooley's range. Among these we know of Warford, Bateman, Ellis, Gamer, A. Hunt, Besson. About 1720<sup>1</sup> a Baptist Church was organized at Baptist-town, known in its earliest days as the Bethlehem Baptist Church. The Dalrymple family, numerous in Kingwood, are of Scotch origin. Their ancestor here, selected land by the advice of James Alexander, Surveyor General of New Jersey, who was the agent of Sir John Dalrymple, to whom Robert Barclay sold land in East Jersey. Kingwood became more especially a Quaker settlement. The old records of the Meeting at Quakertown date back to 1744, when the first monthly meeting was held. In 1767, the minutes show that they were busy building a new meeting house of stone, 39x27. This was to take the place of one built of logs.<sup>2</sup> This would indicate a settlement about 1725.<sup>3</sup> Among the first of whom we have any knowledge as living in that neighborhood are King, Wilson, Clifton, Rockhill, and Stevenson. They all belonged to the Burlington Quarterly Meeting. Later on, Thomas Robeson settled in that locality, the ancestor of the Secretary of the Navy during President Grant's administration; also Thomas Schooley was another settler, who became the owner of large tracts of land on the mountain, which is called after him.

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<sup>1</sup> So it has been stated. But I regard this date as too early by ten or fifteen years.

<sup>2</sup> Kindly furnished by A. R. Vail, clerk of the meeting.

<sup>3</sup> For further particulars respecting Kingwood see quotations from old deeds in a series of articles on "Traditions of our Ancestors," published in the Hunterdon Republican, Feb. 17 and 24, May 5 and 12, 1870.

While the tide of immigration was setting up the Delaware, a similar flow advanced along the Raritan. The persecutions of the Covenanters drove large numbers of them, in 1638 and the following years, to East Jersey, many of whom settled at Plainfield, Scotch Plains and Westfield. They were Presbyterians, and men of virtue, education and courage. The opposition of the people and the proprietors to any arbitrary imposition from England, and freedom of conscience, allured these people to New Jersey. And, as Bancroft says, they gave to "the rising commonwealth a character, which a century and a half has not effaced." The Quakers also settled among them, through the influence of Robert Barclay. Some of these settlers, and many of their children found their way to the richer lands of Hunterdon.

So early as 1685, Dutch Huguenots came to the north branch of the Raritan. In 1699 the Dutch Church of Somerville was formed. Readington township, which lies between the north and south branches, was taken up by four proprietors. George Willocks of Perth Amboy, owned the northeast, *i. e.*, all northward of Holland's Brook and eastward of the White House, to the Lamington river. John Budd and James Logan held the portion northwest of Willocks. Joseph Kirkbride had the southerly part, and Colonel Daniel Coxe, of Philadelphia, the southwest. These two were proprietors of West Jersey. Their lines came to the south branch. On the west of that stream they both had tracts; extending to Flemington.<sup>1</sup> They had their lands surveyed in the year 1712, in which year Kirkbride sold five hundred acres to Emanuel Van Etta; having previously disposed of two hundred acres, west of Van Etta's purchase, to Daniel Seabring and Jerome Van Est. This tract extended from the south branch to the road now leading from Pleasant run to Branchville. On this tract, near Campbell's Brook, was an Indian village. Other settlers from 1710 to 1720 were Stoll, Lott, Biggs, Schomps, Smith, Van Horn, Wyckoff, Cole, Klein, Jennings, Stevens, Johnson, Hoagland, Fisher, Probasco, LeQueer, Schenck,

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<sup>1</sup> See subsequent page.

Voorhees; some of whom came from Long Island. Frederick Van Fleet came from Esopus, New York, in 1725, and bought lands of Van Etta. He shortly after became owner of many acres at Van Fleet's Corner. His son, Thomas, was the great-grandfather of A. V. Van Fleet, the present Vice-Chancellor of the State. Lord Niel Campbell had obtained a deed for land at the forks of the north and south branches, January 9th, 1685. John Dobie, John Campbell, John Drummond and Andrew Hamilton purchased all south of Holland's Brook and west of the south branch, November 9th, 1685. Campbell's Brook was named after that John Campbell.<sup>1</sup>

This district, lying between the confluence of the branches of the Raritan and the Delaware river, soon became known; and its natural advantages attracted the attention of both the Jerseys. A tribe of Indians living near the site of Hartsville, Pa., had a path to and across the Delaware at Lambertville, and thence to Newark, by way of Mt. Airy, Ringos and Reaville. The "Old York Road" was laid on the bed of that path, or rather this path became that road, for the road itself was never surveyed. In a deed for land at Ringos, dated August 25th, 1726, this is described as "The King's Highway that is called the York Road." Another Indian came in from the north, through the valley at Clarksville, the gateway for all their tribes who threaded their way down the great valley of the Kill, or crossed over from Pennsylvania at the forks of the Delaware. This Indian highway led down to the wigwams on the Assanpink. These roads crossed at Ringos. This whole region was heavily wooded with oak, hickory, beach and maple. The forests abounded with game. The streams were alive with fish, and the most delicious shad made annual visitations along the borders. That fish was caught higher up than Flemington, before mill dams obstructed the branch. The hauls of them in the Delaware have been enormous within the memory of old people. Also the Indians were peaceable

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<sup>1</sup> Historical Appendix to the Dedication Sermon of the Readington Church, by the Rev. John Van Liew. Appendix by John B. Thompson.



and friendly. The Raritan was navigable up to the union of the north and south branches. Long afterward, much of the heavy produce was carried to market on these streams, In seasons of freshets the farmers up the river conveyed their grain to New Brunswick in flat bottomed boats, floating them down and pulling them back. Old persons tell us that fifty years ago, brooks were double their present volume. No wonder, then, that East and West Jersey joined hands over Hunterdon County, and that their children were attracted away from their old homesteads at an early day. For that same eagerness to occupy the frontier and push further West, which has been the ruling passion for the last half century, possessed and animated the sons of the settlers in the seventeenth century.

In addition, the political institutions were so liberal in their character, that those who appreciated civil and religious liberty were attracted. And thus it came to pass, that no county in the State had so mixed a population. composed, as it was, of Huguenots, Hollands, Germans, Scotch, Irish, English, and native Americans.

The Coxe estate extended to the present village of Clinton, and joined the Kirkbride tract, the two covering an area of four miles. One of the oldest and most distinguished settlers in that part of the county was Phillip Grandin, His father emigrated from France, and settled in Monmouth County. Phillip and his brother John bought one thousand acres on the the south branch, including Hampton. He built a grist mill and a fulling mill. Afterward this was called Johnston's Mills. It was in a ruined condition one hundred years ago. Cloth was made there for all this region. He was the grandfather of Dr. John Grandin, who was the most noted physician of the county in his day.<sup>1</sup>

On the present site of Clinton were early located mills, called Hunt's Mills. During the revolution large quantities of flour were ground in them. Among the early settlers were James Wilson,

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<sup>1</sup> For further, see History of the District Medical Society of Hunterdon, by John Blane, M. D., and Hunterdon County Republic, March 13st, 1870.

Hope, Foster, Apgar, Bonnell. The most distinguished was Judge Johnston, who came about 1740. He owned a tract of one thousand and two hundred acres. His house was the most stately mansion in the northern part of West Jersey. Being chief magistrate for this section of the county, on Monday of each week court was held in his broad hall. His house became the resort of culture and talent; and his daughter, who afterwards married Charles Stewart, is said to have been the best read woman in the province.

A tract of five thousand and eighty-eight acres, from Asbury to Hampton Junction, was purchased by John Bowlby about 1740. When he was running the boundaries of this land, Col. Daniel Coxe (who was the oldest son of the proprietor, deceased about 1739), was lying out a tract to the east of him. There was a great strife, who should get his survey first on record, so as to secure as much of the Musconetcong Creek as possible. Bowlby was successful. John W. Bray, a descendant of one of the first settlers in connection with A. Taylor, commenced improving Clinton about the time that Governor Clinton of New York died; and they named the place after him.

Returning now toward the north branch, from a deed in the possession of A. E. Sanderson, Esq., of Flemington, it appears that about the year 1711, the West Jersey Society had surveyed for them a section known as "The Society's Great Tract." Of this, James Alexander purchased ten thousand acres in 1744, taking in the whole of the Round Valley and surrounding mountains, and all the land from Bray's hill on the west nearly to the White House, and reaching north to the brow of the hill north of Lambertville. The Lebanon part contained two thousand acres, which were conveyed to Anthony White by Alexander's heirs, September 7th, 1782. This, however, had been held in Trust by Alexander since 1755. These heirs were his son William Lord Sterling, and the wives of Peter Van Brug Livingston (whose sister Sterling had married), Walter Rutherford, John Stevens, and Susanna Alex-

ander, who afterwards married Col. Reid. Walter Rutherford was the owner of large tracts of land in Sussex County. Livingston was a son of Philip Livingston of Livingston Manor, on the Hudson, and a brother of Governor Livingston. All these took a very active part in the Revolutionary struggle. Lord Stirling<sup>1</sup> was the Colonel of the First Battalion formed in New Jersey, November 7th, 1775. The next March (11th), he was made Brigadier-General of the Continental army; Major-General, February 19th, 1777. He twice received the thanks of Congress, January 29th, 1776, and September 24th, 1779. He died of gout at Albany, N. Y., January 15th, 1783, while in command of the Northern Department. Mr. Livingston was a merchant in New York, and contributed largely of his money for the service of his country. The sisters found the old mansion a safe retreat, when their own houses were no longer protected from the incursions of the enemy. John Stevens settled in Round Valley. He was the grandfather of Edward, John, and Robert Livingston Stevens, who became the pioneers in the railroad and steamboat enterprises of our State. Robert when only twenty years old, took the Phoenix, a steamboat built by his father, and one of the first ever constructed, from New York around to Philadelphia, by sea, which is indisputably the *first* instance of *ocean* steam navigation. This was in 1808. Tradition says that Livingston, the associate of Robert Fulton, was a frequent visitor at Round Valley.

One of the first settlers in the neighborhood of White House was Baltes Pickel, who bought one thousand acres from the Budd and Logan tract, at the foot of Cushetunk Mt., now Pickles Mt. Abram Van Horn came from Monmouth to White House about 1749, he took up four hundred acres, south of the railroad and on both sides of the creek, along the turnpike. On the stream he built a mill. When Washington's army lay at Morristown, he was appointed forage master. In his mill he ground flour for the army and hauled it over. His barn was used as a storehouse for forage.

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<sup>1</sup> See life of Stirling, published by N. J. Historical Society.

In this barn, a company of Hessians, taken prisoners at Trenton, were lodged and fed, while on their way to Easton, Pa. This same barn afterwards was used as a house of worship for fifteen years, by the congregation of the Reformed Church.<sup>1</sup>

The settlement of Lebanon, at one time called Jacksonville, and Germantown, is connected with the settlement of German Valley. In 1707 a number of German Reformed people, who had been driven by persecution to Rhenish Prussia, and thence had gone to Holland, embarked for New York. But adverse winds carried their ship into Delaware Bay. Determined, however, to go to the place for which they set out, the banks of the Hudson, they started from Philadelphia and went up to New Hope; there crossing the river they took the Old York Road. Precisely where this band came to the mountainous region is not known. But their vision was charmed with the tempting nature of the soil, and the streams. They found this whole region astir with pioneers, who were prospecting and settling. Abandoning therefore their original intention, they resolved to establish themselves on the good land around them. From them and their descendants, Germantown and German Valley derived their names. The names of these pioneers are yet found on the church record of Lebanon. Probably at New Germantown a few English people had already settled, and this was the first point occupied in Tewksbury township. Among these names are Johnson, Thompson, Cole, Plat, Ireland, Carlisle and Smith. Smith was a large land owner, and ambitious of founding a town. The first street was called Smith's lane, and the first name by which the settlement was known was Smithfield. About 1753 the village began to be called New Germantown. All the land which Smith sold was conveyed in the form of leases, running for one hundred years. Most of the land in and around the village, was bequeathed to Zion's Church, and was rented to

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<sup>1</sup>On White House, see an article by Rev. William Bailey, in "Our Home," a magazine published in Somerville, N. J., in 1873.

tenants on long leases. The greater part of these were bought in, fifty years ago. This is now a Lutheran Society, but the probability is that a religious organization of the Church of England preceded this, and at an early date, probably under Lord Cornbury. For in 1749 an instrument conveys seven acres of ground, and the church building *then erected*, to the Trustees of the Lutheran Society for a period of one hundred and three years. But the Germans who came in before the Revolution predominated. Among these were Jacob Kline, Mellick, one of whose sons went to New York, became a merchant and was the first President of the Chemical Bank; Honeyman, John Bergen, George Wilcox, Adam Ten Eyck who owned a large tract in the southern part of the township.<sup>1</sup> Frederic Bartles was another, who was in the cavalry of Frederic the Great. He was captured by the French, but escaped to Amsterdam. Thence he made his way to London. He came over to Philadelphia and then to New Germantown. He was the grandfather of Charles Bartles, Esq., of Flemington.

North of the village, a large tract was owned by James Parker of Amboy, one of the proprietors of East Jersey. The land on which the Presbyterian Church at Fairmount stands, was given by him before 1760, at which date a church edifice was on the ground. The place was originally called Parkersville. It is probable that the first settlers came about 1740. For Michael Schlatter speaks of preaching in the church of Fox Hill in 1747. The hill was then called Foxenburg, from a man by the name of Fox, who was a very enterprising farmer, and introduced a new and superior kind of wheat. People came from a great distance to buy this wheat for seed. In 1768 the churches of Fox Hill and German Valley, with those of Rockaway and Alexandria, were united under one charge. In 1782 Casper Wack was settled over Lebanon, German Valley, Fox Hill and Ringos.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> An Article in "Our Home," New Germantown, March, 1873.

<sup>2</sup> History of Presbyterian Church, Fairmount, by Rev. Wm. O. Ruston, 1876.

As far as can be ascertained, after the occupation of the land on the eastern and western borders of the county, very soon land was taken up along the great Indian paths already described, especially on the Old York road. From parchment deeds now in possession of Mr. A. S. Laning of Pennington, it appears that in the year 1702, Benjamin Field, one of the proprietors living in Burlington, agreed to sell to Nathan Allen, of Allentown, 1,650 acres, comprising the land in and around Ringos. Field seems to have died suddenly before this was consummated, making his wife, Experience, his sole executrix, by a will dated 13th May, 1702. She conveyed this tract to Allen, by deed dated May 29th, 1702. This, which seems to have been before the purchase from the Indians by the Council, was probably allotted to Field's estate at the time of the dividend in 1703. By a deed bearing date 6th December, 1721, Allen conveyed to Rudolph Harley, of Somerset county, for £75 New York money, 176 acres. The deed conveys all the minerals, mines, fishing, hunting and woods on the tract. Harley removed from Somerset and settled here. On August 25th, 1726, he sold 25 acres of his tract to Theophilus Ketcham, innholder, for £15 English.<sup>1</sup> May 22d, 1720, Allen conveyed 150 acres to Philip Peter. This whole tract of Allen's in a few years was divided into small portions. For, by a release executed June 26th, 1758, the following persons are enumerated as being possessed of parts of the original tract. Ichabod Leigh, 118 acres, Henry Landis, 80, Wm. Schenck, 280, Jacob Sutphin, 150, Tunis Hoppock, 100, Jacob Moore, 138, Obadiah Howsell, 8, Justus Ransel, 30, Rudolph Harley, 142, John Howsell, 3, Gershom Mott, 2, Philip Ringo, 40, James Baird, 18, Anna Lequear, 80, George Thompson, 100, Jeremiah Trout, 3, — Barrack, 100, George Trout, 17, John Hoagland, 200, Derrick Hoagland, 180, John Williamson, 180. In 1724 Francis Moore, of Amwell, bought 100 acres from Allen, which afterward he conveyed to John Dagworthy, of Trenton. Dagworthy

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<sup>1</sup> To me the evidence favors the supposition that he kept the first tavern, and not Ringo, as has generally been held.

sold, on August 6th, 1736, to Philip Ringo, innholder, five acres for £30. On this plot the present tavern stands. On April 18th, 1744, he let him have eight acres more for £50 of the Province, Tradition declares that a log cabin was kept here, which became a famous stopping place known as Ringo's Old Tavern. The son and the grandson, John, continued the business until his death in 1781, when the property was purchased by Joseph Robeson. For many years Ringos was the most important village in the whole Amwell valley. A store was kept here to which the Indians resorted from as far as Somerville. Here public meetings were held to petition the king for the removal of grievances. Later on, celebrations for the whole county centered at this point. It was also a place of considerable trade. Henry Landis who came in 1737, carried on the saddlery business, in which he secured a reputation that extended from Trenton to Sussex. In the prosecution of this business he made money, and became owner of several hundred acres of land. In the old stone house which he built and which is now standing, it is said that Lafayette was confined by sickness for more than a week; and that he was attended by Dr. Gershom Craven, who practiced more than forty years in that part of the county.

Land was loosely surveyed. John Dagworthy, of Trenton, so states one of the deeds already referred to, bought 100 acres. He sold several portions of it, and then suspected that his original purchase was larger than was stated; so he obtained from the Council of the Proprietors of West Jersey a warrant of resurvey, which was done by order of the Surveyor-General, dated Nov. 10th, 1753. It was found to contain seventeen acres overplus. To secure himself he purchased the right to this overplus, as unappropriated lands, from John Reading.

So early as 1725 an Episcopal church was in existence at Ringos. It was built of logs, and was located just beyond the railroad station. It was organized under a charter from the crown, by a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Several of these were established about this time

in the Province, under the auspices of Queen Anne, who instructed Lord Cornbury to see that new churches were erected as need required.<sup>1</sup> Boss settled east of Ringos, and Howsel west by 1725, Schenck in 1726. Other settlers were Jacob Fisher, Lummix, who donated the burial ground to the Episcopal Church, Stevenson, Suydam, Dilts, Shepherd, Larison, Wurts. Peter Young settled at Wurtsville in 1726.

The colony of Germans who passed over the York Road in 1707 was the beginning of a large and continued migration. Some settled at Mt. Airy and around Ringos, others near Round Valley, some at length pressed over to Stillwater and Newton in Sussex county. By the year 1747 a German Reformed congregation was worshipping in a log church which stood in the old grave yard at Larison's Corner, a mile from Ringos. The first pastor was John Conrad Wurts, who for ten years, until 1751, had charge of that and the churches of Lebanon, German Valley and Fox Hill. He was probably the ancestor of Alexander Wurts, Esq., of Flemington. One of the first and prominent men connected with that church was Adam Bellis, who came from Holland about 1740, and bought 250 acres two miles south of Flemington, next to the Kuhls. This was a part of the old Stevenson tract of 1,400 acres. His descendants are yet numerous in and around Flemington. The mill which stands on the stream, near Copper Hill, was built at an early date by Cornelius Stout. The second mill was built in 1812.

At Flemington the tracts of three proprietors touched. Penn had one of 5,000 acres, and Daniel Coxe one of 4,170, which were surveyed by John Reading in 1712. The dividing line ran from east to west, by the lamp post in front of the Presbyterian church. A high stone just over the brook east of the South Branch Railroad is where this line touched the stream. South of this line belonged to Penn; north of it to Coxe. Coxe's was commonly called the Mt. Carmel tract, and the high hill on the top of which is Cherry-

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<sup>1</sup> Smith's N. J., pp. 252-3.



ville still bears the name of Coxe's Hill. On March 24th, 1712, Joseph Kirkbride bought a quarter section or 1,250 acres from John Budd, son and heir of Thomas Budd of Philadelphia, which was taken up as Budd's dividend of one quarter of a propriety, which he purchased of Edward Byllinge, March, 1676. On the same date (1712), Kirkbride also bought 1,250 acres adjacent to this, belonging to Wm. Biddle of Mt. Hope, Burlington county, which was his dividend of a part of a propriety purchased of Byllinge in January, 1676. These two tracts, together 2,500 acres, lay next to Penn's, and extended west and northwest along John Reading's and Edward Rockhill's lines; eastward and north eastward to the South Branch and, on the southerly side, John Kays had a tract bordering on Kirkbride's, and reaching to the Stevenson tract and John Wollman's. November 12th, 1737, this tract was sold to Benjamin Stout for £90. Stout seems already to have occupied  $89\frac{1}{2}$  acres of this tract. His deed speaks of the tract bordering at one part on unappropriated land.<sup>1</sup> From other old deeds it appears that settlers did not occupy land in Flemington earlier than 1731.<sup>2</sup> In that year Coxe sold to Wm. Johnson 210 acres. He came from Ireland. His son Samuel was a distinguished teacher and mathematician. His son, Thomas Potts, was an eloquent and learned lawyer of New Jersey. He married a daughter of Robert Stockton. His portrait may now be seen over the judge's chair in the court room at Flemington. Other settlers, in and around the village, were Johannes Bursenbergh, Philip Kase, Robert Burgess, Wm. Norcross, Johr Hairling, Geo. Alexander, Joseph Smith, James Farrar, Thos. Hunt, Dr. George Creed. Of Dr. Creed nothing is known except that he was practicing at Flemington in 1765. The early settlers were German, Irish and English. In 1756 Samuel Fleming purchased land. The old house where he lived and which was the first built in the village is yet standing. Samuel Southard owned

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<sup>1</sup> In 1736 a tavern was built at Cherryville, which last year yielded to the elements and fell.

<sup>2</sup> The above facts are taken from old deeds held by Aaron Griggs.

and occupied it while he resided in Flemington, where he began the practice of law in 1814, at which time he was an active member of the Presbyterian congregation. He was the first President of the Hunterdon County Bible Society. Fleming kept a tavern in this house, and as other houses were built the settlement which grew up was called Flemings—so it is named on the old maps—and finally, Flemington.<sup>1</sup>

Fleming brought with him from Ireland a boy, Thomas Lowry, who afterwards married his daughter Esther. Lowry became the most prominent man of the village, and acquired much property. He was one of the founders of the Baptist Church in 1765, which was the first Baptist Church in Amwell township. He was a shrewd, sagacious man, who generally succeeded in his undertakings. He was a member from Hunterdon of the Provincial Congress in 1775. After the war, for several years, he was a member of the Legislature. He bought about 1,000 acres of land, taking in nearly all the beautiful and fertile plain where Frenchtown is situated. He purchased a tract of the same extent at Milford. This was probably before the revolution. The Frenchtown tract he sold to Provost for £8,000. Lowry then commenced the improvement of the Milford property, and put up the old red mill and the saw mill at the river. These were completed by 1800. The place was first called Lowrytown. Before the bridge was built across the Delaware there was a ferry above the mill, and hence the name Mill-ford. Lowry was the founder of Frenchtown, where he built a house and mill, and resided until his death in 1809. He was buried in the graveyard of the Kingwood Presbyterian Church. One of his daughters married Dr. Wm. McGill, a prominent physician in that part of the county. Lowry and his wife were very active patriots during the revolution. At the first call he enlisted in the army, being appointed Lieutenant-Colonel of the Third Regi-

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about the settlement and history of Flemington, see Discourse by Rev. G. S. Mott, 1876.

ment in Hunterdon County, June, 1776, of which he afterward became Colonel.

The territory extending from Three Bridges, on the south branch, along the Old York Road to Ringos, was settled at an early day; for in 1738 the Presbyterian Church of First Amwell, near Reaville, is found upon the records of the Presbytery of New Brunswick. Some circumstances lead to the supposition that a congregation existed by 1730. Whitefield preached there in 1739, and says in his diary, "Some thousands of people had gathered here by noon, expecting me." This was the only Presbyterian church in the Amwell Valley, from the branch to the Delaware. In 1753 a parsonage was purchased, and the following names appear on the subscription list: John Smith, Jacob Sutphin, Benjamin Howell, John Steel, Jacob Mattison, Eliab Byram (the pastor), Garret Schenck, Abraham Prall, Peter Prall, Daniel Larew, Thomas Hardin, Benjamin Johnson, David Barham, John Reading (Gov.), John Reading, Jr., Jacob Gray, Daniel Reading, Martin Ryerson (great-grandfather of the late Hon. Martin Ryerson of Newton, N. J.), Daniel Griggs, George Reading, James Stout, Richard Philips, John Anderson, William Anderson, Samuel Carman, Samuel Furman, Thomas Hunt, Jonathan Hill, Samuel Fleming, Richard Reading, Joseph Reading, Samuel Hill, Derrick Sutphen, John Cox, John Francis, William Davison, John Wood, Henry Dildine, Nathaniel Bogert, Abram Larew.

In the year 1754, the population had so increased, that Presbytery was petitioned, "by the people bordering on the Delaware, to give them the privilege of building a meeting-house of their own." This was granted, and the church at Mt. Airy was erected. The frame of this remained until 1874, when a new building was put up.

In 1732 John Emanuel Coryell came to Lambertville. The family left France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and settled near Plainfield. John purchased a tract of two hundred acres. In this was the ferry lot, for which he obtained a patent, January 7th, 1733. In this patent the ferry is mentioned as

formerly known as Coat's Ferry. It was more generally called Wells' Ferry, down to the year 1770. It was so named because it was leased to John Wells in 1719. Whether he and Coryell were rival ferrymen, or had a joint interest, is not known. Wells bought a tract of one hundred acres in 1734, on the Pennsylvania side, near the ferry; and from him the rapids below Lambertville obtain their name, "Wells' Falls." Four brothers, Lambert, came to New Jersey between 1735 and 1746. Two of these, Gershom and John, settled about three miles from Lambertville, having bought tracts of land near each other. John a son of Gershom, born 1846, became a prominent man. He was intelligent, sagacious and energetic. For many years he was a member of the State Council. From 1795 to 1800 he was Vice-President of the Council. From 1800 to 1802 he was President. In 1802 and 1803, he was acting Governor of New Jersey. From 1805 to 1809 he was a member of the House of Representatives of the United States. From 1709 to 1715 he represented this State in the United States Senate. From him the town took its name. His cousin Gershom, a son of John, was an active patriot. He sent two substitutes to the Revolutionary army. He aided the American troops in crossing the river at Lambertville; and when the army laid at Morristown he had barrels made and carried them thither.<sup>1</sup>

At an early day, Allen and Turner, of Philadelphia, bought from the proprietors ten thousand acres north and west of Clinton. The tract extended from VanSyckle's to German Valley, including High Bridge and Clarkesville. Furnaces were in operation at Exton's, near the High Bridge; these were the most extensive. Another was west of VanSyckle's. The Cokesburg furnace was built in 1754, as appears by a stone upon the wall of a part of the old building at that place. There was also the Hackelbarney Forge near the falls of Lamington. These mines were discovered very

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<sup>1</sup> For these facts I am indebted to Dr. Studdiford of Lambert permitted me to peruse his History of Lambertville, now in m but to be published. It will be a valuable local history.

early in the last century. This led to the settlement of this remote part of the country, and probably secured for it gentlemen like Johnston, Stewart and Grandin, whose families became noted for education, refinement and that generous and charming hospitality which wealth and culture can furnish. Their mansions still tell of the grandeur of the past. These mines also determined the character of a large class of settlers, who were hands employed about the furnaces and forges, many of whom, as their names indicate, were Welsh, Germans and Irish. In 1762 Col. Hackett was the superintendent and Mr. Taylor, bookkeeper. In 1775 the superintendent died, and Mr. Taylor was appointed in his place. He remained all through the Revolution. At this furnace balls were cast for the use of the army. Some of the old moulds have been dug up within a few years. After the war the large tract was sold, probably as confiscated property,<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Taylor was selected as one of the commissioners to divide the land. He was allowed the privilege of selecting such a portion as he desired to buy. He chose that around the forge. The surveyor asked him if he should include the mines. Mr. Taylor replied he did not care whether he had them. They were, however, included in the survey, and the price paid was £800 for three hundred and sixty-six acres.<sup>2</sup> This shows that little value was attached to the mines. They were not worked again until the Central Railroad enabled the owners to secure coal at a reasonable price.

Having taken this general survey of the settlement of the county, we must now turn to other portions of its history. In March, 1713, all the territory of West Jersey, north of the Assanpink, was erected into the county of Hunterdon. This was granted at the request of the inhabitants, who stated in their petition, that "their frequent attending the several Courts of Burlington, being at a very great distance from their habitations, has

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<sup>1</sup> See subsequent page.

<sup>2</sup> For further; Hunterdon Republic, January 20th, 1870.

been inconvenient and troublesome, as well as chargeable to the inhabitants of the said upper parts of the said division." And yet it seems that most of the business continued to be done at Burlington. So late as 1726, Trenton, which was the County seat, "had hardly more than one house." In 1748 it had only a hundred.<sup>1</sup> The county was named in honor of Brigadier-General Hunter, who at that time was Governor General of the Provinces of New York and New Jersey, to which he was appointed, June 14th, 1710. Gordon in his history of New Jersey, says he "Was a native of Scotland, and when a boy, was put an apprentice to an apothecary. But he deserted his master and entered the army; and being a man of wit and personal beauty, acquired the affections of Lady Hay, whom he afterwards married. He had been nominated in the year 1707 Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, under George, Earl of Orkney; but having been captured by the French, in his voyage to that colony, was carried into France. He was unquestionably a man of merit, since he enjoyed the intimacy of Swift, Addison and others, distinguished for sense and learning. He mingled freely with the world, and was somewhat tainted by its follies; had engaging manners, blended, perhaps, not unhappily for his success in the Province, with a dash of original vulgarity. His administration, of ten years' duration, was one of almost unbroken harmony." He was the most popular Governor the Crown had appointed, and hence the respect shown him, in calling by his name the only county formed during his administration. By 1722 the county had grown to five townships, of which only one, Amwell, was north of the Sourland range and within the present bounds of the county. In 1726 the population was 3,236.

The Indians who inhabited this State when it was discovered, belonged to the Delawares, who were a part of the great Leni Lenape family, whose different branches roamed the country east of the Alleghenies. They occupied the territory which extended from the Hudson River to and beyond the Potomac. These Delawares

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon's Gazetteer of New Jersey, 253.

had divided themselves into three tribes, two of these calling themselves Menamis and Unalachtgo, or the Turtle and the Turkey, had settled on those lands which lay between the coast and the mountains. The third tribe, the Wolf, or, as they called themselves, the Minsi, or Mouseys, possessed the mountains and the land beyond. They extended their settlements from the Minisink, a place where they held their councils, to the Hudson on the east, and beyond the Susquehanna on the south-west. They were a very war-like race, as their name indicated. Their southern boundary, in this direction, was that range of hills which stretches along the upper line of Hunterdon and the branches of the Raritan. Thus the coast-tribes and the mountaineers came together in this county. Many families of these chose to live by themselves, fixing their abode in villages, and taking a name from their location. Each of these had a chief, who, however, was in a measure subordinate to a head chief.<sup>1</sup> A family was situated on the Neshanic, called the Neshanic Indians. There was another settlement a mile from Flemington, on a brook called the Minisi. One was near the Branch at Three Bridges. There they had a burying ground. Another, one and a half miles south-west from Ringo's, along a creek on Jacob Thatcher's farm. Traces of their village can yet be seen there. Yet another was near Mt. Airy station on the Alexsocken. There was quite a large settlement of them at Rocktown. Indeed, the Amwell Valley was populated with them. As already stated, in 1703 the proprietors purchased of Heinhamoo, a large tract of land in Hunterdon, lying west of the south branch, and they also bought the title to all other lands of the Indians who were supposed to have any right to them. These seem to have been contented, and lived in their villages on the mostly friendly terms with the whites. But the game diminished as the country was settled, so that the Indians were constrained to resort to trade, in order to procure the necessaries of life. They made wooden ladles, bowls, trays, etc., which

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<sup>1</sup> Heckewelder's Indian Nations. Memoirs of Historical Society of Pennsylvania, vol. 12 pp. 48-52.

they exchanged for butter, milk, chickens and meat. They soon acquired a fondness for intoxicating liquors, and, when under their influence, would quarrel and fight in a terrible manner. This became so great an evil, that the Legislature in 1757, laid a penalty upon persons selling strong drink to the Indians, so as to intoxicate them, and declaring all Indian sales and pawns for drink void.

The defeat of General Braddock in the Summer of 1775, produced great consternation throughout all the colonies, and led to disastrous consequences. A hatred of the whites had for years been growing in the hearts of the Indians, who saw themselves becoming more and more helpless, under the steadily increasing encroachments of the settlers. The wrongs which were inflicted upon them, by designing men, aggravated their dislike. So that it was an easy matter for the French, and the Indians already leagued with them in hostilities, to persuade those tribes which had remained nominally at peace with the inhabitants, to join them in a general uprising and onslaught upon the settlers. The Shawnees and Delawares were drawn into this defection also; bands of Indians joined them, many going from the Pines to the Blue Ridge, under this impulse. Numbers who had roamed around the country, much like the tramps of to-day, went off to join the Indian troops and never returned. The people of this section and to the north, were greatly alarmed at this state of things.

The first inroads of the savages were down the Susquehanna through Berks and Northampton Counties, across the Delaware into New Jersey. Some of the scalping parties penetrated within thirty miles of Philadelphia. A letter from Easton, dated December 25th, 1755, states that the "country all above this town for fifty miles is mostly evacuated and ruined. The people have mostly fled into the Jerseys. \* \* The enemy made but few prisoners, murdering almost all that fell into their hands, of all ages and both sexes." The inhabitants of New Jersey, roused by these sufferings of their neighbors, and fearing for their own towns, prepared to resist the foe. Governor Belcher despatched troops promptly from all parts of the province, to



the defence of the western frontier. Col. John Anderson, of Sussex County, collected four hundred men, and secured the upper part of the State. During the winter of 1755 and 1756 marauding parties of French and Indians hung around this western border. To guard against their incursions, a chain of forts and block houses was erected along the mountain and at favorable points on the east bank of the Delaware. Although the inroads of the savages were infrequent, and consisted of small bands, yet the fear which all felt that their mid-night slumber might be broken by the war-whoop, was sufficient to keep them in a constant terror. Many left their homes.<sup>1</sup> A loud call was made upon the Assembly for increased means of defence. This was done, and the force was placed under the command of Col. DeHart.<sup>2</sup>

As an additional measure of protection a treaty was made with Teedyuscung, whereby the Delaware and Shawnees on the Susquehanna were reconciled. The Legislature appointed a committee, who met the Indians of this State at Crosswicks, in the winter of 1756. Their grievances were heard patiently, and then reported to the Legislature, which passed acts in 1757 to relieve them. One of these grievances was, that the Indians had not been paid for certain tracts of land, which had been taken from them. The only portion of Hunterdon, which came within these claims, was a tract of twenty-five hundred acres claimed by Teedyuscung himself, "beginning at Ringos, and extending along the Brunswick road to Nesbannock Creek, thence up the same to George Hattens, thence in a straight course to Petit's place, and so on to a hill called Paatquacktung, thence in a straight line to the place of the beginning, which tract was reserved at the sale." i. e., between Ringos and Copper Hill. The Legislature gave the commissioners power to appropriate £1,600 to purchase a general release of all these claims, one-half of which was to be devoted to paying the Indians residing to the

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<sup>1</sup> Tradition says that people hid themselves in the openings of the mines, at Union.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon's New Jersey, pp. 122 and 124.

south of the Raritan. This offer was accepted, and a treaty concluded at Easton, October 26th, 1758, and thus ended all difficulties with the Indians in New Jersey.<sup>1</sup> This pacification was greatly aided and quickened by an association founded in Philadelphia in 1755, called "The Friendly Association, for regaining and preserving peace with the Indians by pacific measures." Another cause which contributed to this happy result, was that Teedyescunk, who was King of the Delawares and a chief of very wide influence, was a Christian. He became such in 1749, and was baptized by the name of Gideon.<sup>1</sup> Also we may suppose that the influence of John Reading, from 1757 to June, 1758, the acting Governor, while most of these negotiations were in progress, would be exerted in behalf of liberal measures toward the Indians, inasmuch as his early experience as surveyor in Hunterdon County when it was yet a wilderness, and his subsequent residence in this frontier region, would well qualify him to know their wrongs and their needs, while the piety which adorned his life, would lead him to that charity which overlooks ignorance.

Governor Reading had then entered his seventy-third year; and the fact that, at such an advanced age, he occupied so important and prominent position is of itself evidence of the estimation in which he was held. He was a true Jerseyman, from boyhood identified with the interests of the State, and particularly with the growth of Old Hunterdon, by the side of whose ancient thoroughfare, the Old York Road, in the graveyard of the old Amwell Church, his ashes lie.

John Reading and Elizabeth his wife, the father and mother of the Governor, emigrated from England with their two children, John and Elsie. They were Quakers, and left their country on account of the persecution to which the Quakers were subjected. They settled in the town of Gloucester, New Jersey, previous to

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<sup>1</sup> Smith's New Jersey, chap. 23, which contains all the particulars.

<sup>1</sup> This fact of his being a Christian is obtained from the manuscripts of Dr. Studdiford, already mentioned.

the year 1683, as he was that year a member of the Council, meeting in Burlington. He was a landholder in and about Gloucester, of which town he was Recorder from 1693 to 1701, inclusive. He was one of the proprietors of West Jersey and a prominent member of the Council, being often appointed on important committees. He, with William Biddle, Jr., and John Mills, was sent to purchase in 1703, the great tract of one hundred and fifty thousand acres, between the Raritan and the Delaware. He was a surveyor and appointed one of the commissioners to define the boundary line between New York and North Jersey, in 1719.<sup>1</sup> He removed to his tract of land above Lambertville, where he died, and was buried in the ground of the Buckingham Meeting House in Buck's County, Pa.

John, the son, was born June 6th, 1686, and died November 7th, 1767. He and his sister, when children, were taken to England by their mother to be educated. She remained with them nine years, attending to their education; the father living in this country. On the return of the son, it was found that he had embraced the doctrines of the Presbyterians, to which he was ardently attached all his life; and so his descendants have continued. He married Mary Ryerson, a sister of Col. P. Ryerson, then in the British service. He succeeded to the greater part of his father's estate, and followed his father's occupation. In 1712 to 1715 he surveyed tracts for parties in Burlington, who were locating lands through the Amwell Valley, under the grants of the dividend of 1703. At the same time, with an eye to a valuable purchase, which a surveyor would be supposed to have, he secured for himself six hundred acres along the south branch, two miles from Flemington; where afterwards, on a beautiful site, he built the Reading homestead, now occupied by Philip Brown. He is said to have planted the walnut trees growing there. He owned three mill properties, including the farms now in possession of Barton, Stothoff, Deats,

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<sup>1</sup> Smith's New Jersey, p. 412.

Ewing, Clark and Brown. He was a member of "His Majesty's Council," from 1728 to death, and Vice President for ten or twelve years. On the death of Governor Hamilton in 1747, the government devolved on him, until the arrival of Governor Belcher, with whom he had the most friendly and intimate connection. He was one of the first Trustees of Princeton College. His name is at the head of the list in 1748. On the death of Governor Belcher, in August, 1757, he succeeded a second time to the administration, in which he continued until June, 1758, when he was superseded by the arrival of Governor Bernard. His influence and services and money were freely bestowed to lay the foundation of religious privileges, educational advantages and national freedom, upon which we are now building. At the ripe age of eighty-one his long, useful and honored career ended, amid the quiet of that beautiful spot, which, under his cultivation, had emerged from a forest into a garden.

He had a large family of seven sons and three daughters. Five of the sons settled near him, and perpetuated the moral and religious influences of their sire. They were prominent in church matters, and took a lively interest in the Revolutionary struggle. The youngest son, Thomas, was Captain of the 6th Company of the 3d Battalion of the Jersey Brigade, who were mustered in during February, 1774. He served until the Battalion was discharged. A grandson, John, entered the company of his uncle, as Ensign. In January, 1777, he was promoted to First Lieutenant in a Company of another Battalion in which he continued until September, 1780. Another grandson, Samuel, was appointed First Lieutenant in Captain Stout's Company of the "Jersey Line," first establishment, December 18th, 1775. He was taken prisoner at Three Rivers, June 8th, 1776. He became Captain, February 5th, 1777, and Major of the First Regiment, December 29th, 1781, and served until the close of the war.<sup>1</sup> Yet another, Charles, was

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<sup>1</sup> Officers and Men of New Jersey in Revolutionary War, pp. 69, 86, 97.

Lieutenant of the Third Regiment, Hunterdon, and afterwards Captain.

The Governor's oldest daughter, Ann, married Rev. Charles Beatty, one of the first graduates of the Old Log College of Neshaminy, Pa. He was a co-worker with the Tennants in this State, and a prominent clergyman all his life. They were the progenitors of a numerous line of descendants, some of whom have been conspicuous in Church and State. On the female side, eight married Presbyterian ministers. One of the sons, General John Beatty, was in the Revolutionary war, and so was his brother, Colonel Erkuries Beatty. For many years John was one of the prominent citizens of Trenton, being the first President of the Bridge Company, and of the Trenton Bank. Elizabeth, another daughter of Governor Reading, married John Hackett, from whom Hackettstown derived its name.

By the year 1738 the upper part of the county had become so filled with settlers that they petitioned the General Assembly to erect a new county, because the distance to Trenton, where the courts were held, was inconvenient, and to reach it, expensive. Yielding to this petition, a new county was set off, comprising all the upper part of the old above the present boundaries between Hunterdon and Morris and Warren. The new county was called Morris. Although thus shorn of more than half its territory, Hunterdon soon became the wealthiest and most populous of all the counties. Monmouth came next and Burlington third. Somerset was fourth and Middlesex fifth. Wheat was the principal production. The flour was sent to Philadelphia and New York. The State was remarkable for mill-seats even at an early day. And in no part were they so numerous as in this county. Along the north and south branches, they were situated only a few miles apart.

These were of great importance during the Revolution, in supplying with flour that part of the army which hovered between New York and Philadelphia. The iron interest about Union contributed largely to its prosperity. The soil was better adapted

to grazing and wheat than was the country to the south. In 1748 the Raritan Landing was described as a "Market for the most plentiful wheat country for its bigness in America." In 1765 there were within the county, nine Presbyterian churches, Low Dutch, one; German, one; Episcopal, three; Quaker, two; Baptist, two.

We now approach the great struggle with the mother country. The Provincial Congress of New Jersey, in August, 1775, directed fifty-four Companies, each of sixty-four minute men, to be organized, allotting to each county a specific number. Hunterdon's quota was from twenty-five to fifty per cent. above the other counties. The members of this Congress from Hunterdon, were Samuel Tucker, John Mehelm of New Germantown, John Hart and John Stout of Hopewell, Jasper Smith and Thomas Lowry of Flemington, Charles Stewart and Daniel Hunt of Bethlehem, Ralph Hart, Jacob Jennings, Richard Stevens and John Stevens, Jr., of Round Valley, Thomas Stout, Thomas Jones, and John Bassett.

Charles Stewart resided at Landsdown near Clinton. On his return home, he called a meeting at Abram Bonnel's Tavern, and a Regiment of minute-men was raised, probably the first in the State.<sup>1</sup> He was a leading spirit in this movement, and rendered important services, from the commencement of the struggle to its final triumph. Many distinguished loyalists were among his friends, who made every effort to retain him on the King's side, but in vain. He was Colonel of the First Regiment of minute men in this State; then Colonel of the Regiment of the line. By commission from Congress in 1776, he became one of Washington's Staff, as Commissary General, which position he occupied until the close of the war. General Washington and his wife were frequently at his house. His grand daughter; Mrs. Bower, who, after the war, in Philadelphia, received marked attention from Mrs. Washington,

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<sup>1</sup> The first Company of Volunteers offered to the Governor, under the first call of President Lincoln, was from this county—from Flemington.

relates the following, respecting the economy practiced by Mrs. Washington: "She ravelled a set of old satin chair covers, inherited by her. She had the material carded and spun, and with the addition of cotton yarn, woven in alternate broad and narrow stripes, the broad being of white cotton and the narrow of crimson silk. Out of this fabric, she had two morning dresses made for herself." His daughter, Martha, married Robert Wilson, a young Irishman of education, who came to this country and volunteered in the continental army, soon after the battle of Lexington. He was wounded and taken prisoner at the battle of Germantown. Captain Wilson died at his home in Hackettstown, in 1779, at the early age of twenty-eight. Mrs Wilson was distinguished for beauty and for a brilliant and cultured mind.<sup>1</sup>

After the war, General Stewart moved to Flemington, where he occupied a house near the residence of John C. Hopewell, and owned a large farm which extended to Coxe's Hill. He held a leading position in his adopted State, and was her representative in the Congress of 1784 and 1785. After much important public service, he died in Flemington, June 24th, 1800, aged seventy-one years. General Stewart was the son of Robert Stewart, and was born at Gortlea, Donegal County, Ireland, in 1729. His grandfather, Charles, was a Scotch Puritan, and an officer of dragoons in the army of William of Orange, and fought bravely at the battle of the Boyne, for which services he received a handsome domain in the north of Ireland, called Gortlea. Puritan ideas and a love of liberty impelled the grandson to emigrate to America, before he was twenty-one years of age, in 1750. He became a favorite at the house of Judge Johnson, whose daughter, Mary, he married. His enterprise, industry and education, enabled him to acquire a large property; and at Landsdown, near Hampden, where the south branch makes one of its loveliest windings, he erected a mansion, which yet stands to call forth the admiration of the

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Ellet in "Women of the American Revolution," devotes a chapter to Martha Wilson.

traveler. The estate remains in the possession of his descendants. He was of medium height, spare in flesh, with a keen blue eye, expressing intelligence, kindness, bravery and firmness. His portrait, executed by Peale, is still preserved.

He became Surveyor General of the Province of Pennsylvania. At the outset of the difficulties with the mother country, he earnestly espoused the cause of the colonies, and took the active part already stated. He was buried in the family ground of Bethlehem Presbyterian Church. His life-long friend, Chief Justice Smith, of Trenton, wrote his epitaph in these lines :

HE WAS AN EARLY AND DECIDED FRIEND  
TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION  
AND BORE THE IMPORTANT OFFICE OF  
COMMISSARY GENERAL OF ISSUES  
TO UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE.

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HIS FRIENDSHIPS WERE FERVID  
AND LASTING,  
AND COMMANDED BOTH HIS PURSE  
AND HIS SERVICES.

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HIS HOSPITALITY  
WAS EXTENSIVE AND BOUNTIFUL ;  
THE FRIEND AND THE STRANGER  
WERE ALMOST COMPELLED TO  
COME IN.<sup>1</sup>

Some of his descendants have continued in the service of their country to this day. One of his grandsons, Charles Stewart, son of Samuel Stewart, was born in Flemington, where his father lived,

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<sup>1</sup> For this sketch of General Stewart, I am indebted to his grand-daughter, Mrs. Hoyt of Landsdown, widow of the late Captain Hoyt. It is taken from a family record.



near the Presbyterian Church. He was a class-mate, at Princeton, of Dr. Hodge and Alexander Wurts, Esq., and graduated in 1815. He first studied law and then afterwards theology, and went as a missionary to the Sandwich Islands, from which he returned in 1825, on account of the failure of his wife's health. In 1828 he received the appointment of Chaplain in the Navy, in which office he continued until 1862, visiting all parts of the world. He wrote several books on foreign travel which were received with great favor. He died in 1870 at Cooperstown, New York, at the age of seventy-five. A son of his was graduated with General McClellan at West Point. He served the country faithfully during the war, having had charge, for the greater part of the time, of the engineers' department at Fortress Monroe, for which important post he was selected on account of his peculiar fitness. Since the war, he has been put in command of the United States Engineer Corps at San Francisco.

In the work of raising troops, Colonel Maxwell was also very active and efficient. He lived about a mile east of Clinton. After the war he removed to Warren County. He commanded the battalion which was sent to Canada, and, with Morgan and Colonel Philip Johnson, both natives of this county, was engaged in the siege of Quebec. He also took a conspicuous part in the battles of Germantown, Brandywine, Trenton and Monmouth. As a soldier and patriot he had few superiors. He served his country faithfully all through the war, and died at Colonel Stewart's house at Landsdown in 1796, where he was taken suddenly ill, while on a visit, and expired in a few hours.

Another member of this Provincial Congress of 1775, who represented this county, and who afterwards took an active part in the Revolution, was John Mehelm. He emigrated to this country from Ireland. We first hear of him as a schoolmaster in Berk's County, Pa. He was a handsome writer and a fine scholar. He purchased one hundred acres of land and a mill, on the north branch near Pluckamin, since known as Hall's Mills. Here during

the Revolutionary war he manufactured flour, which was used by the army while lying at Pluckamin, and encamped at Morristown. He was Colonel of the Fourth Regiment, Hunterdon, and was on the staff of Major General Dickerson. He was also Quartermaster General and continued a pure and able patriot. He was often associated with John Hart. He was also the friend and companion of Washington, whom he often met that winter, when Washington passed through Pluckamin on his way to the headquarters at Morristown. Colonel Mehelm was a member of the Provincial Congress, which met at Burlington June 10, 1776. This was a revolutionary body, and was in full sympathy with that spirit of independence, which in less than a month renounced allegiance to the British crown. A committee was appointed, consisting of Livingston, Witherspoon, Mehelm and Patterson, who boldly defied the Governor, and summoned him to appear before the Assembly. For his refusal to submit to the orders of the body, Governor Franklin was sent a prisoner to Connecticut, and William Livingston was appointed in his stead, who served the State in that capacity from 1776 to 1790. By him Colonel Mehelm was appointed Surrogate for the counties of Hunterdon and Somerset, which office he held until 1801, when he was removed.<sup>1</sup>

I think Hunterdon county may claim General Morgan as one of her sons. Tradition states that he was born on the farm owned by Major Dusenberry, near New Hampton. There are still visible the remains of an old fire place, which is said to belong to the log house in which Morgan was born. Dr. John Blaine, of Perryville, who has devoted much attention to the early history of this neighborhood, was told this by persons whose mother and aunts lived less than a mile from the residence of the Morgan family. They further stated that when he became large enough to drive a team he went to Pittstown, where he drove a pair of oxen for the proprietors

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<sup>1</sup> From an article in "Our Home," October, 1773, entitled "Pluckamin One Hundred Years Ago," by A. W. McDowell.

of a business there. About 1750 he went to Virginia. Rogers in his "Heroes and Statesmen of America," puts his birthplace in Durham, Pa. This mistake might easily arise from the fact that the family appears to have been connected with the iron companies of the day, and may have lived for a time in Durham. In Appleton's Encyclopædia, edition of 1861, his birth is stated to be in New Jersey in 1736. He was in Braddock's expedition in 1755. At the outbreak of the Revolution he was living in Frederic, now Clarke county, Virginia. Immediately he started for Boston, in command of a company of riflemen, all of whom, like himself, were expert marksmen. He accompanied the expedition of Arnold to Quebec, where he was captured. During that captivity he declined the offer of a Colonelcy in the British army. On his release, toward the close of 1776, he was appointed Colonel of a rifle regiment. This was just in season for him to render those valuable services during Washington's retreat through New Jersey, which endeared him to that commander. His corps of riflemen was the terror of the enemy, and the pride of the Continental army all through the war. Few names are more distinguished during that struggle than General Daniel Morgan.

Associated with Colonel Stewart in his patriotic measures, and conspicuous too, was Colonel Philip Johnston, his brother-in-law. Johnston was the oldest of seven children, and was born in 1741. His father, Judge Samuel Johnston, was a Colonial magistrate thirty years before the Revolution. The family were from Scotland, and belonged to an ancient barony in Anandale. They were a warlike clan and a great terror to the border thieves. Philip left his class in Princeton College to serve in the French war in Canada, from which he returned with military honor and reputation. This fact drew many to his standard, when he called for volunteers in 1776. He was appointed by the Provincial Congress of New Jersey to the command of the First Regiment. At the head of this regiment he went into the battle of Long Island. He was one of the bravest in that hotly contested fight. Force's Revolutionary

Archives gives the following extract from a Philadelphia journal of the day: "We hear that in the late action on Long Island, Col. Philip Johnston, of New Jersey, behaved with remarkable intrepidity and fortitude. By the well-directed fire of his battalion the enemy were several times repulsed, and lanes were made through them, until he received a ball in his breast, which put an end to as brave an officer as ever commanded. General Sullivan, who was close to him when he fell, says that no man could behave with more firmness during the whole action." Just as he was leaving home for the seat of war, he went into the room where his little children were in bed, and, kissing them, he kneeled down and commended his family to God in prayer. One of those three daughters, Mary, became the wife of Joseph Scudder, and was the mother of Dr. John Scudder, the world-renowned missionary to India.<sup>1</sup>

Another prominent patriot in that neighborhood was Captain Adam Hope, who commanded a company of New Jersey Militia (Second Regiment), in the battle of Monmouth. After General Lee's capture, forty of his army on their way to Easton came through Clinton. They stopped at Captain Hope's house and his wife got breakfast for them.

Another was Colonel Bonnell, who established his tavern in 1767 near Clinton. It became a centre for resort to all that section. The first meeting to raise minute-men was held there.

In the neighborhood of Flemington was Colonel Hugh Runyon, who was a bold and fearless officer, full of energy and action amid scenes of danger. Joseph Capner, ancestor of the Capners in Flemington, married one of his daughters.

Captain Joseph Stout commanded a Company of Regulars, in which Samuel Reading, a grandson of the Governor, and Aaron

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<sup>1</sup> These facts are taken from an article in the "Christian Intelligencer," by Rev. Wm. Hall, January 25, 1877. The correctness of them is asserted by Mrs. Hoyt, grand-daughter of Col. Stewart.

Lane were Lieutenants. Stout was killed at the battle of Brandywine, September 11th, 1777. When the men went into service in 1776, we find Captain William Chamberlain's Company from Amwell. Soon after this, he was promoted to Major, and Nathan Stout was Captain; and Philip Service and Christopher Fisher, Lieutenants. Beside these two Stouts, were two other, James and Samuel, who were Captains. David Schomp of Reading, was a Captain in Washington's Secret Service for years, and as such traversed swamp and hill, from the Delaware to the Hudson.

But the zealous proceedings of these patriots do not present the whole picture. Public opinion was divided, especially among the masses. When Lord Cornwallis entered the Jerseys, he issued a proclamation, offering protection to all who would take the oath of allegiance within sixty days, and containing assurances that the obnoxious laws which had occasioned the war would be revised. This produced a wide-spread dissatisfaction toward the patriots. Memorials came to the Provincial Congress from the counties of Monmouth, Hunterdon, Bergen and Sussex, complaining of the hostile intentions and proceedings of the disaffected. "Authentic information was received that other disaffected persons in the county of Hunterdon, had confederated for the purpose of opposing the measures of Congress, and had even proceeded to acts of open and daring violence, having plundered the house of a Captain Jones, beaten, wounded and otherwise abused the friends of freedom in the county, and publicly declared that they would take up arms in behalf of the King of Great Britain. In order to check a combination so hostile and dangerous, Lieutenant Colonel Abram Ten Eick and Major Berry were directed, with the militia of Hunterdon and Somerset, to apprehend these insurgents. On the 1st of July, 1776, the Provincial Congress resolved that the several colonels of the counties, should, without delay, proceed to disarm all persons within their districts who refused to bear arms."

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon's New Jersey, p. 195.

In October, 1777, Governor Livingston remonstrated with the President of Continental Congress, against the order of the Board of War, for sending, Governor Penn of Pennsylvania, and others to Union in Hunterdon County. He says "that region, has always been considerably disaffected, and still continues so, notwithstanding all our efforts; owing, we imagine, in part, to the interest, connections and influence of Mr. John Allen, brother-in-law of Mr. Penn, who is now with the enemy." This Union was the iron works, within a few miles of the home of Colonels Stewart and Johnston. Near the furnaces was the house occupied by Mr. Taylor, the superintendent. He was a patriot. In this house, which now forms a part of the residence of Lewis H. Taylor, Penn and the Attorney General Chew were confined six months as prisoners of war, in charge of Mr. Taylor. Tradition reports that they brought their servants with them, and an Indian fiddler to beguile the hours of their captivity. Governor Penn presented Mr. Taylor with a copy of Dalrymple's Memoirs, with his autograph upon the title page.

At this time the feeling between the two sides was intense and often bitter. Rev. William Frazer was then Rector of the Episcopal Church at Ringos. Being supported by a British Missionary Society, he would not omit the prayers for the royal family. This rendered him obnoxious to the patriots. One Sunday, when he entered his church, a rope was hanging over the pulpit. Public sentiment grew so violent that he was compelled to suspend worship in his church. But so prudent was his conduct and so lovely his character, that soon after peace was declared, he re-opened his church and resumed his ministry, with general acceptance.<sup>1</sup>

During the war, large farms belonging to these tories were confiscated. But they proved of little value to the public treasury, because the sales were generally on credit; and by the progressive

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<sup>1</sup> New Jersey Rev. Cor., pp. 101 and 102.

depreciation of money when the time of payment came, the real value of the money was very small. Public notice was given, February 11th, 1779, that two of the Judges of Hunterdon County would attend at the house of John Ringo, in Amwell, "For the purpose of hearing the claims against the estate of certain fugitives and offenders." These parties were a long list of wealthy men, who did not sympathize with the patriot cause. Thousand of acres were advertised for sale, under these judgments entered by the State.

And yet as a whole, Hunterdon County was strong for the war. In March, 1776, the Committee of Safety, of which Captain Mehelm and John Hart were members, resolved that three battalions of militia be draughted out of the militia of the State, for the help of New York. The quota of Hunterdon was four hundred and forty, which was just double that of any other county.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Frelinghuysen, of Raritan, wrote to Governor Livingston, August 15th, 1777: "I must not forget to congratulate your Excellency, on the great loyalty of Hunterdon County."

The lukewarmness and disaffection already described, were caused by the uncertainties of the incipient struggle, and the disasters of the year 1776. New York was captured, and about the middle of November, Cornwallis entered New Jersey. Governor Livingston made the most strenuous exertions to have the militia who were in the field, oppose the invading force. But the panic which had seized upon the mass of the population could not be controlled. The bare-footed and almost naked Continental army, scantily supplied with ammunition, was retreating before the strong, well equipped battalions of the enemy. The contest seemed hopeless. Those who visited the army brought home an unfavorable report. They secretly or openly advised others to do nothing that would involve them in disloyalty, and thus jeopardized their possessions. Old people tell us that such was the talk with many. The Legislature, itself defenceless, had removed from Princeton to

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<sup>1</sup> New Jersey Rev. Cor., pp. 5, 95.

Burlington, and there on the second of December they adjourned, each man going home to look after his own affairs. Until the battle of Trenton, on the twenty-fifth of that month, New Jersey might have been considered a conquered province. Even Samuel Tucker, Chairman of the Committee of Safety, Treasurer, and Judge of the Supreme Court, took a protection of the British, and thus renounced allegiance to this State and vacated his offices.<sup>1</sup>

But a reaction, decided and permanent, was close at hand. The dispiriting retreat through the State, was accomplished, and Washington was safely on the other side of the Delaware. As the American rear guard crossed the river, the flags of the British danced in the distance. If the enemy had brought boats with them, as was reported, it would have been impossible for the patriots to have hindered their passing over. This was on the third of December. Washington sent four brigades under Generals Mercer, Stephens, DeFermoy and Lord Sterling, who were posted from Yardleys to Coryell's Ferry, in such a way as to guard every point of the river, where a crossing might be attempted. General Sterling was stationed with his troops opposite Lambertville, at Beaumont's, about three miles below New Hope. Redoubts were cast up, one on the top of the hill back of the school house at New Hope. General Washington rode up to inspect these, probably returning the same day. He ordered a stockade intrenchment to be made, and batteries to be posted. As it was important that he should have command of all the boats on the river, General Green was charged with the duty. He ordered General Ewing to send sixteen Durham boats and four flats down to McKonkey's (Washington's crossing). These Durham boats were large, flat and pointed at each end, being used for conveying iron from Dunham to Philadelphia. General Maxwell was directed to collect the boats high up the river, as there was danger of the enemy seizing them, and to place them under strong guard. This service was

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon's New Jersey, p. 237.



assigned to Captain Daniel Bray, afterwards General Bray, of the New Jersey Militia, Captain Jacob Gearheart and Captain Thomas Jones, who collected all the boats on the upper waters of the Delaware and Lehigh, and brought them down to Coryell's Ferry. The boats were hid behind Malta Island, just below what is known as "The Mills," on the Pennsylvania side. The island was densely wooded, so that the boats could not be seen by a reconnoitering party of the enemy, as it looked down from the New Jersey heights. These boats were thus secured for the famous crossing of Christmas night.<sup>1</sup> Captain Bray was a native of Kingwood, and was familiar with every boat and crossing along the river. Captain Gerhart was from Flemington. To procure these boats, to conceal their plan from the tories who were lurking about, and who would betray them at the first opportunity, to cut out these flat boats in the darkness of those cold winter nights, to float them down amid the rocks and through the rapids, to keep them from being crushed or swamped, was a task most difficult and hazardous. But it was successfully accomplished. Cornwallis was informed of this enterprise, and sent a detachment to seize these boats, but they could not find them, or were afraid to venture across the river in the face of those frowning batteries.

Probably while engaged in this search the British learned that a lot of guns was stored in Flemington. A part of Cornwallis' army was then encamped just below Pennington. Five hundred cavalry were detailed to seize these arms. At that time, near the Presbyterian Church, was a long, low, frame building. For many years afterward it was a store, famous throughout that part of the county. It afforded a market for wheat to a wide section. The store was kept in connection with a mill, on the site of John Rockafellow's mill. In this building a quantity of muskets had been stored by the Continentals. The cavalry reached the village early in the morning and found in the street a man in a cart, whom they pressed

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Studdiford's Manuscripts. Also History of Berk's County, by W. W. Davis.

into their service. The chests, with the guns packed in them, were taken out of the building and put into the cart, and then the whole troop hastened away. But when they reached Tattersall's Lane, where the tile kiln now is, they became alarmed, and concluded it would be better to destroy the muskets than attempt to carry them away. So they broke the guns by striking them upon the posts of the fence. In the meantime Captain John Schenck had collected a band of men and secreted them in a piece of woods between Copper Hill and Larasons. As the horsemen filed through this, they were fired upon. Captain Geary, the commander of the British, ordered his troops to halt and face the spot whence the firing proceeded, when he was almost immediately shot through the head. His men wheeled and fled. Afraid that they might meet more opposition if they returned the same road they came, the British turned and went toward New Brunswick. Captain Geary's body was buried in the woods.

This Captain Schenck, afterwards Colonel, was a brave officer. With Colonel Charles Stewart he rallied the minute-men in 1775, and was active during the whole conflict, in various ways.

The success of Washington at Trenton and Princeton was not the only cause of turning the tide toward the patriots. Neither the proclamation of Cornwallis nor protection papers saved the people from plunder. Discontent and murmurs at the outrages perpetrated by British and Hessians increased on every side. Infants, children, old men and women were left without a blanket to protect themselves from the inclemency of winter. The most brutal outrages were perpetrated by a licentious soldiery. The whole country became hostile to the invaders. Sufferers of all parties arose, as with one accord, to revenge their personal injuries.<sup>1</sup>

“When General Washington was retreating through the Jerseys almost forsaken by all others, her militia were at all times obedient to his orders; and for a considerable length of time composed the strength of his army.<sup>2</sup> And of this praise Hunterdon county

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon's American War, Vol. 2., p. 178, 180.

<sup>2</sup> Winterbotham's History of America, Vol. 2, p. 303.

deserves a large share, because she furnished more soldiers than any other county: Her scouts and guides were of priceless value.

After the battle of Trenton the American army went into Winter quarters, part at Morristown and part at Valley Forge. The direct road between these lay through Amwell Valley and over Coryell's Ferry.

The Spring of 1777 revealed this state of things, for which Washington must provide. General Burgoyne, with a superior force of the British, was moving from Canada southward. General Howe was at New York. He would either endeavor, by moving up the Hudson, to possess himself of the forts and high grounds occupied by the Americans, and thus open the southern part of the way to New York for Burgoyne, and separate New England from the rest of the Colonies; or he would attempt Philadelphia. Washington was uncertain which of these courses would be adopted; hence he must be prepared for both. To do this, he determined to occupy the high grounds of New Jersey, north of New Brunswick. About ten miles in that direction, at Middlebrook, a low range of mountains forms the apex of a triangle, the sides of which extend toward the northeast and northwest. These heights could be rendered almost impregnable against the enemy, while they would serve as a watch-tower to command the course of the Raritan, the road to Philadelphia, the hills about New Brunswick, and a considerable part of the country between that place and Amboy, thus affording a full view of any important movement on the part of the enemy. Washington directed the troops from Jersey to South Carolina to assemble in this State, and, breaking up his camp at Morristown, he made Middlebrook his headquarters, May 28, 1777. Gen. Howe was preparing to attack Philadelphia, but first he wanted to draw the American General from his strong position. Leaving 2,000 troops at Brunswick, he advanced, June 14, with two columns from different directions, which arrived about the same hour. Washington had posted his army in order of battle, on the heights in front of the camp, and refused to come down. General Howe, finding he could not be drawn from his strong position, retired. But this movement of General Howe toward Philadelphia

roused the militia of this part of the State, and with great alacrity they took the field, principally joining General Sullivan, who had retired from Princeton behind the southern hills towards Flemington, where a considerable army was forming to oppose the enemy, should he attempt to cross Coryell's Ferry, which seemed to be his object. Influenced, no doubt, by this gathering of forces, Howe ceased to threaten Philadelphia by land, and determined to embark his troops for the Delaware. Indeed, it would have been an act of unpardonable military recklessness to have proceeded, when the enemy was combining in his front, and was ready with an army to follow in his rear. By this planning, the Amwell Valley was saved from the ravages of an invading host; and also, perhaps, lost the glory of becoming one of the famous battle-fields of the Revolution. Probably this is the time when the Baptist church at Flemington, was occupied as barracks by American soldiers. Marks of their muskets were visible on the floor of the old church. A panic prevailed along the Old York Road in that region. Farmers drove their cattle to hiding places. Household valuables were buried, or carried to the houses of friends at a distance. The women and children were prepared to flee at a moment's warning.

The county for several years previous to the war, was quite evenly populated, so that it must have been inconvenient and expensive to the many residing about Flemington and northward, to go to Trenton for the transaction of business; that county-seat being at the extreme southern corner. The unsettled state of the country, which diverted public attention from local necessities, and the general disturbance arising from the fact that the county was a thoroughfare for both armies, prevented a change in the county town. But we find that in 1785, two years after the treaty of peace, as soon, therefore, as the matter could be attended to, the county-seat was removed to Flemington, which was nearly in the centre. The village at that time consisted of probably not more than twelve or fifteen houses. For in 1809, there were only sixteen houses between the Baptist and Presbyterian churches, which comprised most of the village. However, it was important as a

centre of trade. There was also living there a lawyer and judge, Jasper Smith, a gentleman of great energy and public spirit; who was afterward prominent in the formation of the Presbyterian church in that village. Indeed, he may be called its founder. I believe that he had a great deal to do in securing the location of the county-seat. Because two miles further toward Clinton, on the south branch, was another point called Readings, the focus of several roads leading to all parts of the county. This also was a centre of trade. And there the county-seat should have been located. It is in many respects a more desirable site. The bank of the Branch is high, the drainage would have been excellent and the land is beautifully situated for building lots. Besides, the water power is such that the town by this day would have become the seat of flourishing manufactures. The Court House was not built until the Summer of 1791. It was on the site of the present buildings, and was constructed of stone brought "from Large's land in Kingwood." This edifice was destroyed by fire in February, 1828. This delay in building was probably caused by the poverty of the county, and the fluctuating value of money. In 1780 a continental paper dollar was worth one copper. In 1779 linen was one hundred and forty shillings a yard, shoes one hundred and twenty shillings a pair, pocket handkerchiefs seventy shillings a piece.<sup>1</sup> All other clothing in proportion. After the war, and even to the opening of the century, wages were fifty cents a day, and corn eighty cents a bushel.

The Presbyterian congregations of the two Amwell churches, finding that the salary was insufficient on account of the depreciation of the paper money, a joint meeting, held January 21st, 1779, agreed that the salary should be paid in produce at the old prices, or as much money as would purchase it. Some paid in money, some in produce, some in both, as the salary lists show. It was determined to purchase a new parsonage, and a subscription was

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<sup>1</sup> New Jersey Rev. Cor., p. 184.

made, but when they came to buy, the price of land had risen beyond the amount supposed to be necessary. And then the trustees hired "a plantation adjoining the parsonage for one hundred and fifty pounds, in order the better to support the ministers." In 1790 both paper money and coin were in circulation. From an old paper labelled "Account of Supplies," of the First Amwell Church, it appears that the sum paid for one Sunday's services was one pound and ten shillings; for preaching and administrating the Lord's Supper, three pounds. This was the amount in "hard money," as the account has it. Sometimes the supplies were paid in paper money, sometimes in coin and sometimes in both. There is this N. B.: "The law is lately altered in not making paper money equal to hard money, in hard money engagements. One-half is now (1790, April 4th), the current exchange." A collection for a poor student in divinity gives this amount: paper money, twenty-five shillings; silver, seventeen shillings; copper, twelve shillings and two pence.

According to the census of 1790, the population of Hunterdon was twenty thousand, one hundred and fifty-three. This made it the first county in numbers; but close to it pressed Sussex with nineteen thousand, five hundred; and Burlington with eighteen thousand and ninety-five. Then came Essex, Monmouth, Morris and Middlesex, each about one thousand less in the order named. Gloucester, thirteen thousand, three hundred and three; Bergen, twelve thousand, six hundred and one; Somerset, twelve thousand, two hundred and ninety-six; Salem, ten thousand, four hundred and thirty-seven; while Cumberland and Cape May came in at the foot, the former with eight thousand, two hundred and forty-eight, and the latter with only two thousand, five hundred and seventy-one. The total population of the State was one hundred and eighty-four thousand, one hundred and thirty-nine. The population of the townships of Hunterdon was—Amwell, five thousand, two hundred and one, which was more than double that of any other township. Kingwood, two thousand, four hundred and forty; Hopewell, two thousand, three hundred and twenty; Trenton, one thousand, nine

hundred and forty-six, Alexandria, one thousand, five hundred and three; Bethlehem, one thousand, three hundred and thirty-five; Maidenhead, one thousand, and thirty-two. Lebanon, Readington and Tewksbury, are combined, four thousand, three hundred and seventy. The number of slaves, one thousand, three hundred and one, and of free blacks, one hundred and ninety-one. But in the next ten years the increase was very small in this part of the State, both in Hunterdon and Somerset; the former adding to her population one thousand one hundred and eight, and the latter, five hundred and nineteen. The cause of this was that the young people were drawn to the great west of that day—central New York and western Pennsylvania<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, the whole State has been a hive of States—constantly sending out swarms, whose labors have tended to subdue and fertilize western wilds—so that the State is remarkable for the paucity of the increase of its population, until within a recent period. In this same decade of which I am speaking, 1790 to 1800, the increase in the whole State was only twenty-seven thousand, eight hundred and ten. The ratio of increase from 1790 to 1820 was thirteen and a half per cent. for each decennial term. But in the first half of the last century, the rate of increase was about thirty per cent. in eight years. Hunterdon, by the year 1800, had dropped down to the fourth county in population; and yet the difference between it and Sussex, which was the highest, was only one thousand two hundred and seventy-three. In 1810, Hunterdon held the same relative position to the other counties, but Essex had now risen to the head, which it has since maintained. The population of Hunterdon then was twenty-four thousand, five hundred and fifty-six.

Let us recall the fact, that across the present territory of Hunterdon passed several important highways. One ran through New Hampton, via Pittstown, Quakertown, Ringos on to Pennington and

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<sup>1</sup> An old record, 1797, of Flemington Presbyterian church, states, that collections were made by order of Presbytery to support missionaries on those frontiers.

Trenton. The great east and west line was the Old York Road, running the length of the Amwell valley, and passing out of the State at Lambertville. The third, of less importance than the other two, and yet a great road in its day, was the Somerville and Easton Turnpike, which entered the county at Lambertville and passed out at Bloomsbury; furnishing the outlet from the southern part of Warren, and from Easton to New York, via New Brunswick. Although this was not chartered as a turnpike until 1812, the road itself was laid out prior to the Revolution. Produce was carried along this road to New Brunswick, which at the beginning of this century was the most thriving mart of trade in the State. To the same city large wagons from Pennsylvania and from the Amwell valley, drawn by six horses, heavily laden with flour, flaxseed, flax and other kinds of produce, went over the Old York Road.

The iron spring at Schooleys Mt., like most of those of any value on the continent, was known to the Indians, generations probably before the European advent. It was their tales of these *waters of life*, as they poetically called them, which led to the belief of the "Fountain of Youth," which the old Spanish explorer, Ponce de Leon, so ardently desired. Almost from the settlement of the State, the ailing resorted to this iron spring. Its virtue attracted the valetudinarian, while the high altitude, 1,100 feet above the ocean, and the beauty of its surroundings rendered it a favorite place of resort. Thither went for many years after the Revolution, the old aristocracy of Philadelphia, who traveled in their own conveyances, which were large coaches, drawn by four or six horses and with the family coat of arms emblazoned on the sides. Their route was the first day to New Hope, the second day across the river and along the Old York Road to Pluckamin, and the third day reaching the mountain. None of those which came over this route attracted as much attention as Judge Coxe. He was a grandson of Daniel Coxe, one of the first proprietors of West Jersey, whose large proprietary tracts made his descendants immensely wealthy. In the latter part of the century, Charles Coxe bought the farm of one thousand two hundred acres that was owned by Judge



Johnston at Sidney, and afterwards the residence of Judge Wilson. In the old mansion Judge Coxe spent his Summers, extending a princely hospitality to the first families of Philadelphia, who were his guests weeks at a time.<sup>1</sup> He was a man of enterprise, and sought to turn the splendid water power on his land to account, by establishing a large woolen factory. He also was impressed with the unrivalled advantages that region possessed, in its streams of water, for large manufacturing enterprises. For at that day, before the steam engine displaced the water wheel, capitalists were eager to secure water power. About this period it was, 1793, that a company obtained the water-rights at Paterson. In order, however, to render the water power of this region available, better means of transportation must be obtained than was furnished by a turnpike. He applied, therefore, to the Legislature for a charter, to build a canal from the Delaware at Easton, to some point on the south branch above Clinton, and thence by the best practicable route to Trenton. This was about 1706. The application, however, was unsuccessful. Another project was to make slack water navigation up the south branch, thus securing an outlet through the Raritan. At that time these streams were larger than they are now.

Winterbotham, in 1796, describes the people of New Jersey thus: "The Presbyterian, the Quaker, the Episcopalian, the Baptist, the German and Low Dutch Calvinist, the Methodist and the Moravian, have each their distinguishing characteristics, either in their worship, their discipline or their dress. There is still another characteristical difference, distinct from either of the others, which arises from the intercourse of the inhabitants with different States. The people in West Jersey trade to Philadelphia, and of course, imitate the fashions and imbibe their manners. The inhabitants of East Jersey, trade to New York, and regulate their

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<sup>1</sup> One of his daughters married Lucius Stockton, who was the first clerk of Hunterdon. He built a part of the house now occupied by Charles Bartles, Esq., in Flemington. There he had his office.

fashions and manners according to those in New York; so that the difference in fashions and manners between East and West Jersey, is nearly as great as between New York and Philadelphia." In this county the two influences were blended, because communication was divided; the eastern part trading with New Brunswick and New York, and the western with Trenton and Philadelphia. And all the religious denominations mentioned, except the Moravian, had congregations within the bounds of Hunterdon.

The people generally were distinguished for industry. The children when not put to trades, or not migrating to the new country, remained with their parents working on the farm. This was especially the case with the oldest son. For the European idea of primogeniture had not yielded to the more equal distribution of an estate. To that son, the homestead was willed. When he married, he remained at home with his parents. And an addition was built on the old house for his accommodation. Where the father owned several hundred acres, he set off a portion to his sons as they married. This subdivision kept on, until the farms reached their present size.

Religion generally had declined, during and after the war. French infidelity poisoned the minds of too many of the prominent men of the county; and its effect was felt upon the people. Intemperance prevailed at the opening of this century to a frightful extent. The early settlers in Hunterdon, like all the Dutch and Germans, and indeed English of that age, used malt liquors as a beverage. The war of the Revolution brought rum and whiskey into general use. The use of these, acquired in the army, was continued by the soldiers on their return home. More liquor was drunk, per capita, in this country for the two or three decades after the war than by any other nation on the face of the earth. Its manufacture made extensive progress in the States.<sup>1</sup> Thirteen hundred retail licenses were issued in the year 1800, and intemperance grew, so that we

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<sup>1</sup>Winterbotham, Vol. I, 351.

were denominated over the civilized world as a nation of drunkards. In one township along the Raritan, at the commencement of this century, eight distilleries were in operation. Custom required each hand, in hay or harvest, to be furnished with one pint of rum a day. Almost every farmer had his cellar stocked with barrels of cider, spirits and rye whiskey. The county was full of taverns. The education of poor children was neglected. In prominent villages, like Pennington and Flemington, academies were established, which were under the care of trustees. There were also private schools, kept mostly by clergymen. Such places were centres of intelligence and refinement. In 1802 several libraries were in existence. At Trenton, Elliott Howell, Librarian; Pennington, Achilles Wilson, Librarian; Ringos, David Bishop, Librarian; Flemington, Asher Atkinson, Librarian.<sup>1</sup>

The general training days were scenes of frightful disorder. Fighting, to decide who was champion, or as the result of quarrels engendered by rum, was common; indeed it was almost the necessary attendant of trainings and elections.

There were few wagons. People went to meeting afoot for four to six miles, wearing thick shoes, sometimes none at all, until near the church, and then they put on Sunday shoes. It was common for the men to sit in church without coats.

Whipping was the penalty for small offences. This seems to have been inflicted upon the slaves, more frequently than on other classes of offenders. A slave, if found five miles from home, was arrested and whipped by the constable; for which five shillings were received, to be paid by the master or mistress. The whip was made of thongs of raw hide, plaited sometimes with fine wire.

Only one newspaper was published in the county. That was a weekly in Trenton. The mails slowly proceeded to the principal villages, and at intervals found their way to remote parts. So late as 1822 one mail came up from Trenton to Flemington on Tuesday,

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<sup>1</sup>From Collector's book of 1802 in possession of Peter Young at Ringos.

and thence to the other parts of the county, returning on Saturday.

We speak of those times as distinguished for simplicity, goodness, honor—as better days than our own. We do “not inquire wisely concerning this.” In all that render morals, education and religion, an acquaintance with current events, and facility in travel, superior to mere physical enjoyment, the advantage is greatly with us.

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